

St. Michel's Creole Benevolent Association  
416 East Government Street  
Pensacola  
Escambia County  
Florida

HABS No. FLA-210  
HABS  
FLA  
17-PENSA  
22-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. FLA-210

## ST. MICHAEL'S CREOLE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

Location: 416 East Government Street, Pensacola, Escambia County, Florida. The structure is located on the north side of East Government Street on the east 33'-11" of the west 40'-9" of Lot 110, Block 18 of the Old City Tract of Pensacola.

Present Owner: Roy Stark

Present Occupant: Light Designs, Inc.

Present Use: Contemporary lighting store

Statement of Significance: The Pensacola Creoles, of Spanish-Negro descent, settled in the city in the early 1800's and contributed to its growth throughout the nineteenth century. They organized a social club in 1878 and constructed this meeting hall for their own use in 1895.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The United States Land Commissioners confirmed Manuel Domingues' claim to Lot 110 as he had been granted the Lot by Baron Carondelet in 1796. In February 1828, Domingues sold the Lot, described as, "...containing 37 English feet front on Cuna /Government/ Street by 170 feet in depth, bounded on the east by lot of Bobe Domingo and West by lot of the purchaser.", to Henry Ahrens for \$185. Apparently by May 1828, Micajah Crupper had laid claim to the property when he sold it to Samuel Patterson for \$250. The lot was described as being west of the lot owned by Crupper. The next year, 1829, Henry Ahrens sold the same property to Patterson, to clear the title, for \$185. Ahrens was described as living on the lot west of the property included in the sale.

In 1831 and 1832, Henry Ahrens and May Ann Domingues filed Quit Claim Deeds with one another. Also, George and Clara Barkley, who had paid Micajah Crupper \$300 in 1829 for Lots 110, 111, and 112, filed a Quit Claim Deed with Ahrens. Thus, with his title cleared by 1833, Samuel Patterson sold the Lot 110 tract to Caleb Swan. The executors of Swan's estate sold the property to

Peter Knowles in 1879. Knowles sold the property to the Saint Michael's Benevolent Social Club on August 22, 1881. In 1928 the property was transferred to the Saint Michael's Creole Benevolent Association after the organization was incorporated.

2. Date of erection: The existing structure, built in 1895, was dedicated January 21, 1896 according to The Pensacola Daily News of January 22, 1896.
3. Architect: Unknown
4. Original plans and construction information: Original paint colors were gold with red trim and black window sash.
5. Alterations and additions: The east porch was partially enclosed in the 1920's to provide restroom facilities. The support piers were lowered after the 1916 hurricane and interior metal braces were added to strengthen the building. A galvanized metal roof replaces the original wood shingles.
6. Important old views: A photocopy of a post 1926 photograph accompanies this data.

B. Historic Events and Persons Connected with this Structure:

The Creole Benevolent Association was organized as a social club in 1878 and was one of the oldest societies in the city of Pensacola. At one time it was one of the largest and among its members were a mayor and several other public officials as well as the leader of the city's largest band. The Association, which met once a month and maintained the meeting hall, payed hospital, medical and death benefits to its members. It was disbanded in 1971 and the sale of the hall in 1972 marked the final disposition of its assets.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Deed Books, Clerk of Courts Office, Escambia County Court House, Pensacola, Florida.
2. Secondary and published sources: Constitution and By-Laws of the Creole Catholic Benevolent Association, 1897; Constitution and By-Laws of the St. Michael's Creole Benevolent Association, 1957.

Prepared by Rodd L. Wheaton  
Architect, HABS  
1972  
with abstract research  
by Linda V. Ellsworth  
Assistant Historian  
Historic Pensacola  
Preservation Board  
1972

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## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Description: This one-story frame building is rectangular in plan with its south gabled three bay facade parallelling the street. The condition of the fabric is good with a few minor alterations.
- B. Description of Exterior:
1. Overall dimensions: The building measures 31'-3 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 65'-11" with the short dimension parallelling the street.
  2. Foundations: Brick foundation piers (18" x 18" x 24") support the floor structure. On the south, east, and west walls, the space between the piers has been filled in with brick. The south wall is covered with a cement wash.
  3. Wall construction, finish and color: The wood frame structure is weatherboarded, though German siding is used on the east porch enclosure. Red painted trim contrasts with the gold painted siding.
  4. Structural system, framing: The wood frame structure has floor joists which are notched over beams which parallel the short dimension. The floor joists at the rear of the structure run parallel to the long dimension.
  5. Porches: The 6' wide porch extends across the south (front) facade and around the east elevation where it is terminated by a gabled appendage. The north end of the porch has been enclosed. The wood slat ceiling and the tongue and groove flooring, which extends under the east enclosure, are painted red. The red painted moulded cornice and the boxed entablature are supported on simple turned wood columns. Jig-saw cut, reverse C-scroll corner brackets extend from the columns, above the turning, to the soffit of the entablature. The column bays have balustrades with moulded hand rails, turned balusters,

and plain bottom rails. The entablature, columns, corner brackets, and balusters are painted gold, while the column pedestals, into which are nailed the railings, are all painted red. The original, segmentally-arched plywood sign, which states in plain block letters, "ST. MICHAEL'S CREOLE BENEVOLENT ASSOC., ORGANIZED 1876," has been removed and is displayed inside. A similar red and gold arched business sign is now centered over the flight of concrete steps with podia at the front entrance. At the rear, a landing with wood steps leading down from the central door has been replaced by a similar structure in concrete.

6. Chimneys: No exterior chimneys exist. A post-1926 photograph indicates that there was a chimney at the northwest corner of the roof that had a sheet metal flue above a brick stack.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The double outswing doors of the central south facade entrance with its three light transom are set within a plain board trimmed opening. The paneled and glazed doors have three small lights above two large lights set over three square panels over two large panels in each leaf. The bolection mouldings and the panels are painted gold, which contrasts to the red painted stiles and rails. The three equally spaced rear doors of the main structure and the appendage have four gold painted panels and red painted frames.
  - b. Windows and shutters: The south and east windows which open onto the porch have full-length two-over-four light sash (10'-1" x 3'-9") and are hung with adjustable louvered blinds. Two-over-two light sash windows fill the appendage and west elevation window openings, which have louvered blinds. Four light windows are set in the porch enclosure. The front and rear attic gables have pointed head, louvered vents. The frames and the blinds are painted red; the sash is painted black.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape and covering: The steeply pitched gable roof and the half hip porch roof set below the eaves of the main structure are both covered with corrugated sheet metal.

- b. Cornice and eaves: The soffit of the eaves and the overhanging verges are boxed with narrow slats, painted red. A small cavetto crown moulding extends under the shingling at the eaves and the rakes as do barge and facia boards with a small bed moulding. The porch cornice has simple moulded crown and bed mouldings. HABS FLA 17-PENSA 22-
- c. Description of Interior: The interior space of the structure is uninterrupted except for a partition wall at the north end creating a 10' wide kitchen and storage room. The interior walls are covered with wainscoting to a height of 4'-1" and the remainder by 2½" horizontal boarding. After the 1926 hurricane the Association installed in the interior two pair of iron tie-rods set at angles so that each pair is tied to a cross-brace. The rods are attached to the studding of the east and west walls of the hall.
- d. Site and Surroundings: The structure, set back from the street, is nearly the width of the lot. A post-1926 photograph indicates that a picket fence once enclosed the front yard. There are no outbuildings.

Prepared by Edward Bondi, Jr.  
HABS--Pensacola  
September 6, 1968

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project, sponsored by the Pensacola Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission, now known as the Historic Pensacola Preservation Board of Trustees, in cooperation with the Historic American Buildings Survey, was recorded during the summer of 1968 in Pensacola under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS; Professor F. Blair Reeves, AIA (University of Florida), Project Supervisor; and Student Assistant Architects John O. Crosby (University of Florida), David L. Van de Ven, Jr. (Texas Technological College), and Edward Bondi, Jr. (University of Florida). This historical information was prepared by Professor Samuel Proctor (University of Florida), by Assistant Historian Linda V. Ellsworth (Historic Pensacola Preservation Board), and by Rodd L. Wheaton (Architect, HABS) who edited all the data in 1972.

Addendum to

HABS No. FL-210

St. Michael's Creole Benevolent Association  
Seville Square Historic District  
416 East Government Street  
Pensacola  
Escambia County  
Florida

as recorded in 1968 and 1972

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PHOTOGRAPH

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

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